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October 28, 1996

Sir Michael Atiyah
Master
Trinity College
Cambridge, CB2 1TQ
UNITED KINGDOM

Dear Michael,

I am writing to solicit your support for a new joint venture, to promote a series of conferences on the foundations of fundamental physics and the related intellectual history, to be sponsored by the University of Cambridge, Boston University and Harvard University.

There was a very successful first meeting of this series at Boston University last March, organized by Professor Cao, in which I was glad to participate. In my view, the time is now ripe for setting work at the frontiers of research in theoretical physics in a historical and philosophical context, partly of course for the sake of history and philosophy, but also as an antidote to the misunderstandings fostered by postmodernists and social constructivists. For this purpose, it seems essential that an interdisciplinary community of physicists, mathematicians, historians and philosophers of mathematical physics should get together to share their views.

Fortunately there now exists a group of philosophers and historians of physics, including Tian Yu Cao at Boston University, Gerald Holton and Peter Galison at Harvard University, and Michael Redhead and Jeremy Butterfield at the University of Cambridge, who are familiar with the technical side of modern physics. They have been the driving spirits behind the new initiative, and have kept me aware of their plans.

This group now plans to hold the next conference at Cambridge in 1997. They will be in touch with you about the details. I commend the project to you.

All best regards,

Steven Weinberg

cc: Jeremy Butterfield, Michael Redhead, Tian Yu Cao,
Peter Galison